

Beloved Adhyapya:

In the past several weeks we have been dwelling upon a subject that I know is intensely interesting to you. Now, there comes a time when we must turn to other topics, temporarily at least, thus affording you plenty of time to practice and meditate over the Work of Psychic Defense which has been given to you, and then, later, we will take up some of these higher phases again.

Tonight, therefore, I am going to talk to you about the real meaning of Ritual as we see it in the Church, whether it be in the simple Forms of the Protestant Faith, or in the more elaborate Rituals of the High Church. Remember always that Ritual is Meditation expressed in action, and while these Ceremonies have largely lost, in the minds of most people, at least, their underlying Mystical Actuality, there are however, wonderful Depths to Ritual when it is understood. But unless we understand the Esoteric Psychology of Meditation, we shall not understand Ritual. To those accustomed to meditate, it may seem a simple thing to think about something for a given time, and so it may be if the thing thought about is well within the range of our experience, and if it interests us, but if the object of our Meditation is below the horizon of our experience, (dimly sensed as the flow of a hidden thought) if it is just beyond the range of Consciousness and we see the Light it reflects, but not itself, then Meditation is a different matter, and the Subject of our Concentration is but an Illusion and ever stays beyond our reach. This alone is true Mystic Meditation, the out-reaching of the Mind, at fullest stretch, from the Known into the Unknown.

Now, the Occultist, not blessed with the winged Mind of the Mystic, has his own devices for securing these illusive things of Vision. He takes for his Meditation, not the illusive Light reflected like the Auroric Aureola, but a Landmark which has a definite bearing in relation to place whence the Light arises; he can't see the Light, from where he stands, but he knows that if he directs his steps towards the chosen Landmark, from that spot, when he arrives there, he will see the Light itself. The Symbols upon which he meditates are, for him, the Caverns of the Hill of Vision, and he finds that when he has identified himself with the chosen Symbols, when, in other words, he stands beside the Landmark which he has used to guide his steps, he will then see the Light of the Uncreated Actuality, which was the real object of his worship.

For the Occultist, therefore, Meditation is performed by means of Symbols, each of which is ultimately resolved into its Essence. For the Ceremonialist, Ritual is a series of Active Symbols, by means of which he causes the Congregation who witness the Rite to accompany him in his Meditation, until they, too, all and severally, stand beside the landmark and see the Light, and to them, also the Symbols shall be resolved into their Essence. In this manner, those who could not of themselves perform any deep and coherent Mystical Meditation are led in Thought, thru the Astral Corridors, to the Mount of Illumination. The Celebrant exalts the Consciousness of the Congregation by enabling them to travel upon the Wings of Imagination, while they cannot walk upon the Feet of Reason, setting one foot before the other, logically.

In order to secure a focussed instead of a diffused exaltation of Consciousness, the Occultist uses certain conventional Symbols when he performs a Ritual, he uses certain conventional Gestures corresponding to these Symbols, this is the Ancient Language which came

before Speech, which is used by the animals and even by the forms in which Nature, herself, delineates Spiritual Types. Ritual is a Cosmic Language in which Ideals are expressed by Gestures, just as in the Classical Schools of the Ballet. These are not arbitrary but are the natural Attitudes that the Human Form assumes, and anyone who uses the Pictorial Methods of the Composition of Place in Meditation finds that he spontaneously pictures himself as assuming these Attitudes so Universal that they are enshrined in Sacred Sculpture in all parts of the World. But not only are these Symbolic Gestures but also Symbolic Objects, and these Objects are the natural counterparts of the Gestures and arise as spontaneously, for they are the instruments of the Gestures.

The Rod, the Sword, and the Cup, all these things are the products of the Gesturing Hand. Were there a Magician who could petrify like Gordon's Head, the Power of the Aspirations and the Strivings of the Soul, we should see rendered visible before us the furniture of the Lodge or the Decorations of the Sanctuary. Cathedrals have been called Prayers in Stone, and the Writer spoke more truly than he knew who said that they might be more truly called Souls in Stone, for the Ancient Cruciform Shape is the type of the Crucified.

Phase by Phase, the Ritual unrolls itself, passing from the preliminary Invocation, which is the preparation of the Place, thru the Purification, to the Prayer for Grace and Help in human things, hence, to the Summoning of Power into the World of Form, the Priest or Minister functioning as a Magician in materializing in his own Soul, and in the Group-Mind of the Congregation the living sense of a Contact with Invisible and Awe-ful Potencies. Out of the Majesty of this Invocation arises the Mighty Ritual of the Mass and the Power to perform it. The Mass itself is the Ritual of the Cup, as is, of course, the Communion of the Protestant Churches - it is the calling down of Power into a Receptacle, that Receptacle being the Soul of Man. It is not the Raying Forth of Power, as in the Rituals in which the Rod takes part, nor is it the Cut and Clash of the Sword Ritual, nor the Bludgeoning of the Hammer of Thor, these are Positive Rituals, and the Cup, or Communion, is a Negative, Receptive Ritual. The Cup is lifted on high and the down-pouring Force fills it. Macrocosmically, the Minister uplifts the Cup and Microcosmically the hearts of the Participants are lifted up with it, for in the Macrocosm the heart center is the Cup, but the Cup is no ordinary Cup, that is thus uplifted, for it is Sacred and Sacred in a special way. It is not the Cup of Dionysus, consecrated to a Divine Inebriation, and it is not the Cup of Hemlock that ends all in an Aeon, it is the Cup of which the Master first prayed that it might pass from Him, and of which, ultimately, He drank; it is the Cup of the Last Supper.

The Ritual, as it advances, in its Traditional Majesty, builds before the Inner Eye an Image of the Table spread in the Upper Chamber. The Scene, familiar from our earliest memories of things Sacred, appears before us. The Disciples rejoicing that the Bridegroom is still with them, the Master overshadowed and yet illumined by His Knowledge of the impending crisis. He holds out the Cup and says, "Drink ye all of this," they think He means the wine, but we know He meant the experience. And again He gives them the broken bread and says, "This is my body." It is the Immemorial Symbol of the Sacrificed God, slain that people may live. In the atmosphere of earth is built up a Mighty Image of the Sacrificed God, Osiris, Balder, Quetzalcoatl, Prometheus, all held out that Cup in turn. Into that vast Image entered the Master, representing the latest Aspect of the Cosmic Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, and identified Himself with it; thus did He become a Saviour whose Sacrifice had Power to

save His people from their sins, taken, of course in the sense that He is a Personal Saviour only to the extent that we tread the Path that He outlines.

And as this Image forms before the eyes of the Imagination we too enter into that Vast and Mighty Presence, the Presence of the Great Eternal Christ-Force, co-existent with the Father from the Beginning of Life, the Cup is formulated in our midst, the Power descends, the Atmosphere of the Sanctuary is charged to the highest tension, then at the summons of the Celebrant, the Congregation steps up to the Alter Rail and partakes; the Minister reaches out to them across the Invisible Barrier between the Inner and the Outer which is marked by the Threshold of the Sanctuary, and they receive each one his own Modicum of Power conveyed magically and imaginatively in the Bread and Wine; the Bread which is the Negative Aspect of that Power and the Wine which is its Positive and Dynamic Aspect; the Bread which sustains and the Wine which is the Soma Juice which consecrates the Vision of the Initiate. The Roman Church gives the Bread to the people and reserves the Wine for the Priest in order that he, and he alone, may function with Power, but at the Reformation, Martin Luther said, "Every man shall be his own Priest," and gave the Wine to the people.

In the Ideal Church, therefore, from the standpoint of the Occultist, the people should have the Wine and they should be called on to participate in the Invisible Aspects of the Ceremony, and with this end in view the Ritual of such a Church would be worked by two people instead of by one, and the two are not Chief and Subordinate, but the Positive and Negative Poles of the Dynamism of the Communion or Mass. The Ministrant works with the Invisible Forces and forms the Channel of the Manifestation; the Reader works with the Group-Mind of the Congregation and leads them out thru the Astral Corridors into the heights of the Mind of Vision. Throughout the Ceremony they make no movement save to rise when they arrive at the points where they enter into the action of the Ritual. He leads them, too, in their Responses, where the Group-Mind of Congregation links up with the Force that is being formulated on the other side of the Altar Rail. He is, in fact, the bellwether of the Flock; he is the Archetypal Penitent, the Archetypal Communicant; in him are exemplified the aspirations of the whole Congregation when he reads the words of Holy Scripture which form the body of his Ritual.

We do not worship Graven Images with a superstitious observance, but we invoke the Forms not made with hands, Eternal in the Heaven of the Imagination, which are the Channels of Manifestation to us of the Powers of the Great Unmanifest. These are the Rainbow Rays of the Invisible Light which blinds us in its whiteness; these are the Powers of the Ineffable Brightness which are revealed and displayed by the Image-making Faculty, the Mind, working beyond the Threshold of Consciousness according to its Immemorial fashion, building those Great Places of Heaven and populating them with Celestial Forms which are the Spiritual Heritage of every Race. These means do we invoke the Astral Images which represent to our Mind the Eternal Uncreated Actuality which we can only hope to see "as in a glass darkly," while we yet dwell in the Tabernacle of the Flesh. There are times and seasons when the Soul unlatches the Door of its Dwelling and slips into the Starry Depths of Unconsciousness and sees God face to face. It comes forth in Sleep, in Trance, and in Death, but for the most part it takes no pitcher to the Waters of Life and returns empty-handed. Symbolical Expression of Scripture and Ritual is the Pitcher in which the Waters of Life are brought back to the World of Men and shown to their Mortal eyes, that they may see, and seeing, believe, and believing, drink and thirst no more.